ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A technique for identifying one or more items from amongst a plurality of items in response to a spoken utterance is used to improve call routing and information retrieval systems which employ automatic speech recognition (ASR). An automatic speech recognizer is used to recognize the utterance, including generating a plurality of hypotheses for the utterance. A query element is then generated for use in identifying one or more items from amongst the plurality of items. The query element includes a set of values representing two or more of the hypotheses, each value corresponding to one of the words in the hypotheses. Each value in the query element is then weighted based on hypothesis confidence, word confidence, or both, as determined by the ASR process. The query element is then applied to the plurality of items to identify one or more items which satisfy the query.